

An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet



Personal Safety Domestic Abuse



Introduction

The term 'Domestic Abuse', though not defined in legislation is a term that evokes both fear and disgust in most people. It can be regarded as the physical, sexual, mental, financial or emotional abuse of one partner by the other partner in a relationship. **Women in heterosexual relationships account for the majority of reported victims of domestic abuse.** Men in heterosexual relationships and men and women of same sex relationships can also be victims. Children can also be subjected to domestic abuse.

Other forms can include -

- abuse of older people by abusive spouses, children, relatives, carers, and
- abuse of people with disabilities by either their carers, partners or relatives

Domestic Abuse crosses gender, age, class, race and religious belief. Remember, there is no 'type' of woman or man to whom it occurs, and there is no 'type' of home in which it happens.

Am I being abused?

Domestic abuse includes all kinds of physical, sexual, mental, financial and emotional abuse within an intimate relationship. Ask yourself the following questions which, though not absolute or all-encompassing, will provoke thought and help you assess your situation.

Does your partner -

- Push/shove, hit, punch, slap, kick or bite you or the children?
- Threaten to harm you, the children or your relatives?
- Threaten to or use a weapon against you?
- Threaten to kill you if you leave?
- Force you to have sex against your will?
- Anger easily when drinking or taking drugs?
- Humiliate you in front of others?
- Deliberately / maliciously destroy personal property or other items of sentimental value to you?
- Constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?

- Constantly and obsessively 'track' your time and whereabouts?
- Constantly criticise you or put you down?
- Prevent you from working, leaving your home or socialising?
- Discourage your relationships with family and friends?
- Control all finances and force you to account in detail for what you spend?
- Deny you access to money even for household necessities?

If you answer 'yes' to even **one** of these questions then you may be the subject of domestic abuse and you should carefully consider your situation.

The Cycle of Abuse

Domestic abuse tends to follow three phases -

- Tension-building phase
- Violent / battering phase, and
- Reconciliation / loving phase

It is important to remember that once abuse has begun, it not only continues, but over time increases in both frequency and severity. As the abuse continues, the three phase cycle begins to change for the worst. The tension building phase becomes shorter and more intense, the violent battering incidents become more frequent and severe, and the reconciliation periods become shorter and less intense.

What can I do to be safe?

The first thing to remember is that you do not have to accept this.

Nobody has the right to assault or abuse another person!

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, safety is the first priority for you and your children. Help is available from the Gardaí and other appropriate organisations e.g. Women's Aid, AMEN etc. (see 'Useful Contacts and Links' section overleaf for their details).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION ISSUES,
PLEASE CONTACT
your local GARDÁ CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER
or
visit the Garda website at www.garda.ie**

It is the duty of the Gardaí to provide protection to you and to investigate fully all incidents of domestic abuse, including reports of domestic abuse received from third parties.

If you are in immediate danger -

- **Call the Gardaí on 112 or 999.** They will provide protection and can put you in contact with organisations that can provide you with counselling, advice or shelter. They can also offer you information with regard to obtaining Protection / Barring Orders etc.
- **Leave as soon as possible or have someone come to stay with you** if this increases your safety; otherwise, go to the house of a neighbour / friend / relative or other safe place.

If you are not in immediate danger, but need help -

- You can, of course, call the Gardaí, or
- Call one of the various organisations that can offer you advice, counselling or refuge (contact details for some of these organisations are provided under 'Useful Contacts and Links' at the end of this leaflet).

Medical Attention

Always get medical attention if you have been hurt and ask the medical staff to take photographs of your injuries. Where possible, keep all records of your attacks - these can be helpful if you decide to take legal action.

Legal Issues

You can obtain information from a number of sources including the Gardaí, the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) and other support organisations. The Courts can issue Safety Orders, Barring Orders, Interim Barring Orders and Protection Orders. These are defined in the Domestic Violence Act, 1996. Information on these orders can be found on the FLAC website.

Forward Planning - Make a Safety Plan

You should consider forward planning to develop an action plan in case another incident occurs. This can help you to feel more in control and prepare you for what to do if such an event happens.

Your action plan could include:

- Making a list of people you could call in the event of an incident, or if you felt you were in danger.
- Deciding where you would go if you had to leave your home.
- Keeping extra clothing, toiletries, money, personal items with someone you trust.
- Knowing where identification and other important papers are kept in case you need them quickly.
- Alerting trusted neighbours to call the Gardaí if they hear any suspicious sounds coming from your home.
- Practice making an emergency escape (with your children) and travelling to the location you have chosen as a safe place.
- Making a list of other preparations you may want to consider.

When you decide to leave, whether for a short period or longer term, you will need to take with you some or all of the following items if you can do so safely; if not, you can return to the house at a later stage accompanied by the Gardaí to retrieve your belongings -

- * Money
- * Credit Cards
- * Car Keys
- * Passport
- * Clothes
- * Cheque Books
- * Prescribed Medication
- * Driving licence
- * Work Permit (if relevant)
- * Address / Telephone Book

Other additional items to consider taking if you have time include -

- * Birth Certificate
- * Children's birth certificates
- * Family medical records
- * Children's Allowance books
- * Social Welfare books
- * Car registration papers
- * School records
- * Some toys for the children
- * Photos and personal items of importance
- * Jewellery

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

Garda National Protective Services Bureau GNPSB

Garda HQ
Harcourt Square
Dublin 2
01-6663423 (Not manned 24/7)
gnpsb@garda.ie (not manned 24/7)

or you local Garda Station.

An Garda Síochána (www.garda.ie)

In an Emergency - call 112 or 999

Cosc (www.cosc.ie)

cosc@justice.ie
Tel: (01) 4768680

Womens Aid (www.womensaid.ie)

Freefone 1800 341 900

Safe Ireland (www.safeireland.ie)

info@safeireland.ie.

AMEN (www.amen.ie)

Tel: (046) 9023718 info@amen.ie

Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) (www.flac.ie)

Tel: (01) 8745690/ 1890350250

Crime Victims Helpline (www.crimevictimshelpline.ie)

Tel 116006. Text 0851337711
info@crimevictimshelpline.ie

Samaritans (www.samaritans.org)

Tel: 1850 60 90 90 / 116123